



News Release

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Hantavirus-Related Death in Duchesne County

The last confirmed human hantavirus infection in Utah was in 2004

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Public Health Laboratory has confirmed a fatality that occurred in the Uintah Basin due to Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome. The man was a resident of Duchesne County, between the ages of 19-29 years. The otherwise healthy man became ill and went to the hospital on September 2, 2008. He died the next day. The Utah Department Health and TriCounty Health Department are working together to investigate.

It is suspected that this individual was exposed to hantavirus while cleaning up rodent droppings. Hantavirus is shed in the urine and fecal droppings of rodents (typically deer mice). Humans can become infected by inhaling dust that contains dried contaminated rodent urine or feces.

Prior to this case, the last confirmed hantavirus infection in Utah occurred in 2004. From 2000 – 2007, there were a total of 13 confirmed hantavirus cases in Utah, two of which were fatal. While hantavirus infections in Utah are rare, they still do occur and are very serious. Because of this, it is important that people take precautions to protect themselves against becoming infected with hantavirus.

The best way to prevent hantavirus is to eliminate or minimize contact with rodents or their droppings. The following tips will help eliminate or minimize risk of exposure:

- Remove brush, grass and garbage from around building foundations to get rid of commonly used nesting materials.
- Keep tight-fitting lids on garbage cans.

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- Store all food (including pet food) in rodent-proof containers.
- Do not leave open bowls of pet food outside. Properly dispose of uneaten pet food.
- Clean up rodent droppings using a wet method such as spraying disinfectant (diluted bleach) prior to cleaning, then use a wet mop or towel to moistened with disinfectant to clean.
- Do not clean up rodent droppings using a dry method such as sweeping and vacuuming.
- Wear gloves, a dust mask, long-sleeved clothing and protective eyewear while cleaning up or in areas where there are rodent droppings.

Initial symptoms of hantavirus include: fever, fatigue, and muscle aches, especially in large muscle groups. Gastrointestinal symptoms as well as dizziness may accompany these symptoms. As the disease progresses, symptoms can include cough and shortness of breath.

If you may have been exposed to rodent droppings and are experiencing similar symptoms, it is important to seek medical care as soon as possible.

For more information on hantavirus, visit the Utah Department of Health Web site at: health.utah.gov/epi/diseases/hantavirus/.

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